

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-20

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, PAN

SUBJECT: FMD AGREEMENT

REFERENCE: STATE 103835

1. DRAFT TEXT OF USDA ANNOUNCEMENT PUBLICIZING FMD AGREEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS: QUOTE THE UNITED STATES AND PANAMA HAVE AGREED TO STRENGTHEN A PROGRAM TO HELP PROTECT THE U.S. LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY FROM FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE (FMD), THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) ANNOUNCED TODAY.

THE AGREEMENT IS PART OF A JOINT EFFORT BY THE U.S., PANAMA AND COLOMBIA TO PREVENT FMD FROM SPREADING ACROSS THE DARIEN GAP -- A VERY DENSE RAIN FOREST BETWEEN PANAMA AND COLOMBIA -- AND THEREBY PROTECT THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRIES
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OF PANAMA, CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA.

THE ONLY UNFINISHED SECTION OF THE PAN-AMERICAN HIGHWAY IS IN THE DARIEN GAP. WHEN THE HIGHWAY IS COMPLETED, IT WILL DIMINISH THE NATURAL BARRIER WHICH THE DARIEN GAP HAS PRESENTED TO THE SPREAD OF FMD FROM COLOMBIA TO THE COUNTRIES TO THE NORTH. FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE IS HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS, AFFECTING CATTLE, SWINE, SHEEP AND OTHER CLOVEN-HOOFED ANIMALS. ONCE ESTABLISHED IN A COUNTRY, IT CAN REDUCE LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION EFFICIENCY BY AS MUCH AS 25 PERCENT, LEADING TO SHORTAGES OF MEAT AND POULTRY PRODUCTS

AND HIGHER FOOD COSTS. NO OUTBREAKS OF THE DISEASE HAVE OCCURRED IN THE US SINCE 1929.

UNDER THE AGREEMENT, PANAMA'S EXISTING PROTECTION PROGRAM WILL BE STRENGTHENED. PANAMA AND OIRSA, AN ORGANIZATION OF MINISTRIES OF AGRICULTURE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES AND MEXICO, HAVE BEEN CONDUCTING A FMD-PREVENTION PROGRAM ALONG THE PANAMA-COLOMBIA BORDER SINCE 1966.

THE PROGRAM CONSISTS OF THE SURVEILLANCE AND MAINTAINENCE OF TWO ZONES. AN "INSPECTION" ZONE, ESSENTIALLY FREE OF LIVESTOCK, IS MAINTAINED ALONG THE PANAMA-COLOMBIA BORDER. NEXT TO THE INSPECTION ZONE IS A "CONTROL" ZONE IN WHICH COMMERCIAL LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION IS ALLOWED, BUT ONLY UNDER THE STRICT SUPERVISION OF ANIMAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES.

USDA'S ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE (APHIS) WILL COOPERATE WITH PANAMA IN THIS AGREEMENT.

RECOGNITION OF THE NEED TO IMPLEMENT ADDED PROTECTIVE MEASURES AGAINST THE SPREAD OF FMD BEFORE THE PAN-AMERICAN HIGHWAY IS COMPLETED THROUGH THE DARIEN GAP LED TO THE AGREEMENTS WITH COLOMBIA AND PANAMA TO BETTER PROTECT ALL COUNTRIES CONCERNED. UNQUOTE.

2. REQUEST ANY COMMENTS ASAP. RUSH

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